



## **Travels in Time** **Historic Theaters**

### **Paramount Theater, Anderson (Madison County)**

This 1929 Spanish Eclectic style building was designed by Alvin Strauss, an architect from Fort Wayne. Chicago architect John Eberson specifically designed the theater. Eberson was known for his innovated designs of atmospheric theaters—theaters with ceilings that look like the sky complete with twinkling stars and moving clouds. He designed approximately 150 such theaters in the 1920s but only twelve exist today. Unfortunately the Depression resulted in the rather abrupt decline in popularity of atmospheric theaters due to their large size and operating costs.



Many theaters of the time utilized the Spanish Eclectic style, made popular as a result of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. The style represented an exotic and fantasy-like world that was a perfect match for the escapism associated with motion pictures. The motion of atmospheric theaters transformed entertainment into a total experience—it helped to propel the audience into another place and time.

The Paramount closed for a time in 1930 and 1931 but continued to run until 1969. From 1969-1989, the theater changed hands a number of times and by May 1989 it was in danger of demolition. Fortunately a group of community members formed a foundation to save and restore the Paramount.

Guided tours are available.

Paramount Theatre Centre  
1124 Meridian St.  
Anderson, IN 46016  
(800) 523-4658  
[www.parathea.org](http://www.parathea.org)

### **Buskirk-Chumley Theater "Indiana", Bloomington (Monroe County)**

Originally known as the Indiana Theater, the Buskirk-Chumley has quite a history. The 600-seat Indiana Theater was built in 1922 to show movies but soon after it opened its doors, vaudeville and live acts performed on the stage. Bloomington native Hoagy Carmichael was a regular on the stage from 1925-1928.

In 1975 Kerasotes Theaters took over the Indiana and continued to show movies there until the mid-1990s. At that point Kerasotes gave the theater to the Bloomington Area Arts Council with the stipulation that they not show movies at the theater. A major fundraising campaign funded the \$3.2 million restoration and the theater reopened in 1999. It was renamed the Buskirk-Chumley in honor of two generous donors to the restoration effort.



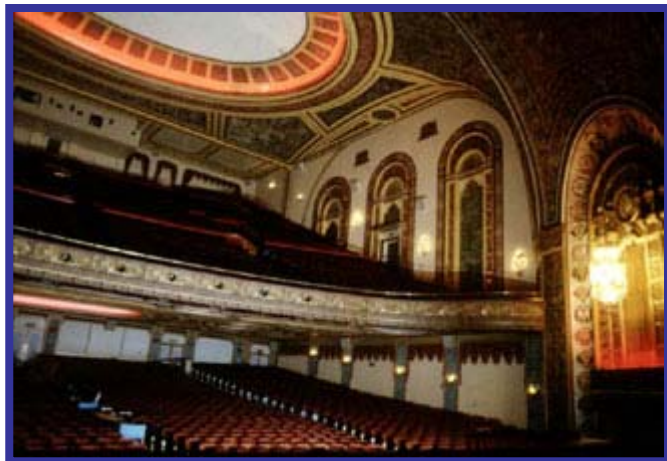
Today the Buskirk-Chumley hosts a variety of live acts and has renegotiated with Kerasotes and can once again show movies.

Buskirk-Chumley Theater  
114 E. Kirkwood Ave.  
Bloomington, IN 47408  
812/ 323-3022  
[www.buskirkchumley.org](http://www.buskirkchumley.org)

### **Embassy Theater, Fort Wayne (Allen County)**

Originally called the Emboyd Theater, the theater opened in 1928 with 3100 seats. Given the \$1.5 million price tag, opulence reigned throughout the building. However not all the extravagance was visible. The Emboyd contained a state-of-the-art 200-ton steel girder system to support the balcony, an air conditioning system and 1150 organ pipes flanked the stage.

In 1952 the name was changed to the Embassy Theater and it continued with live shows and movies. From 1952-1972 the focus shifted to movies but the popularity of going to see a movie downtown was waning. The owners decided that it would be more profitable to tear down the theater and make a



parking lot than to maintain the building. Fortunately the community rallied and formed the Embassy Theatre Foundation. The foundation sponsored a major renovation in 1995 and continues to maintain the building.

Embassy Centre  
125 West Jefferson Blvd  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
260/ 424-6287  
[www.embassycentre.org](http://www.embassycentre.org)



### **Indiana Theater, Terre Haute (Vigo County)**

The Spanish Revival style Indiana Theater is yet another creation of Chicago architect John Eberson. It was built in 1922 with a capacity of 1600 people on the main floor and in two balconies. The corner entry opens into a 3 story open rotunda that features terrazzo floors, decorative plaster and terra cotta, mosaics, 38 hand-carved sculptures, and a fountain. With the exception of the fountain, these elements

carry over into the lobby and the theater. The total project cost \$750,000.

The theater currently hosts movies and live performances.

Indiana Theatre  
683 Ohio Street  
Terre Haute, IN 47807  
812/ 235-0225  
[www.indianatheater.com](http://www.indianatheater.com)

### **Morris Performing Arts Center, "Palace Theater" South Bend (St. Joseph)**

The Palace Theater was designed by J. S. Aroner, a Chicago architect, in 1922 as part of the Orpheum theater chain. Initially it hosted vaudeville shows, which ran continuously with a new act every ten minutes. However in 1929, the Palace showed its first movie and, consequently, the last vaudeville act was in 1930.

The theater prospered up through the 1940s. It even hosted the world premiere of "Knut Rockne: All American" in 1940. Two thousand four hundred people were able to see the movie while over 24,000 gathered outside to watch for its stars, among them Ronald Reagan and Bob Hope.



Unfortunately this success did not last. Theaters around the country felt the impact of television and the ability to watch entertainment in the comfort of your own home took its toll. By 1959 the board of the Palace voted to have it demolished. That's when Mrs. E. M. Morris, a wealthy community member in South Bend, purchased the theater and proceeded to sell it to the city for \$1. The Palace was renamed the Morris Civic Auditorium in her honor.

The theater continued to host live performances and underwent a small restoration effort in the early 1960s. However, from 1998-2000 a large scale renovation and restoration took place to update the theater with 21<sup>st</sup> century technology and to restore the building to its 1920s splendor.

Morris Performing Arts Center  
211 N. Michigan St.  
South Bend, IN 46601  
574/ 235-9198  
[www.morriscenter.com](http://www.morriscenter.com)

### **Alhambra Theatorium, Evansville (Vanderburgh)**

The Alhambra, designed by Frank J. Schlotter, opened in 1913. The 350 seat theater was built within a local neighborhood rather than a commercial area. It only took 120 days to construct the Alhambra with a final cost of \$18,000. Schlotter utilized Moorish elements to embellish the theater.

It served as a movie theater in 1956 and then was used sporadically over the years. In 1994 a major exterior restoration began. The intention was to convert it into a community playhouse. However, a variety of events occurred resulting in a 2003 Sheriff's Sale. The group of local citizens formed Alhambra Theatre Inc and purchased the theater. The organization has placed a protective covenant on the theater and future plans include completing the interior restoration and create a multi-use facility in the neighborhood.



The Alhambra is located at:

50 Adams Avenue  
Evansville, IN

To contact Alhambra Theater Inc.:

Alhambra Theatre, Inc.  
1007 Parrett Street  
Evansville, IN 47713  
812/425-3828



## Huntington Theater, Huntington (Huntington)

The Huntington Theater was constructed in 1904 as a vaudeville house. It had 1100 seats, including 400 in the balcony. By 1911 the Huntington started showing movies and continued doing so until 1999. A major remodeling occurred in 1939 when the interior was gutted and the front façade was adapted to the Art Deco style, complete with ticket booth. A multiplex came to



Huntington in 1999 and sold the Theater with the stipulation that movies not be shown there for 25 years. A local couple purchased the Huntington to save it and completed necessary maintenance. They attempted to show classic movies but this path did not generate enough income. The theater is currently leased to a newly formed church congregation.

526-538 North Jefferson Street  
Huntington, IN

## Indiana Repertory Theater "Indiana Theater", Indianapolis (Marion)



The 1927 Indiana Theater is the largest theater ever built in Indianapolis. Architects Rubush and Hunter designed the six-story building faced in white glazed terra cotta in the Spanish Baroque style. The central bay of the exterior is overwhelmed with delicately carved terra cotta. The theater ended up costing \$1.5 million when it was completed. In addition to the stunning main façade, great expense

was taken with the interior. The lobby is an assault on the senses with marble, molded plaster, decorative tile and a myriad of colors. Still more money was allocated for state of the art technology of the time. The theater was equipped with

air conditioning and the 6<sup>th</sup> floor ballroom had a "sea breeze" where outside air passed over iced salt water in the summer and warmed salt water in the winter to give the effect of a real Spanish town. There was an elevator lift in the orchestra pit that allowed for performances at either stage level or floor level. Yet another lift was installed for the Barton organ so that moving it around was an easier task.

The theater continued to host live acts until it closed in 1975. The Indiana Repertory Theater moved into the theater in 1980 and from 1997-2001 undertook a series of renovations to various portions of the theater.

Indiana Repertory Theater  
140 W. Washington St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
317/ 635-5277  
[www.indianarep.com](http://www.indianarep.com)



### Circle Theater, Indianapolis (Marion)

Unlike many of the larger scale theaters around the state, the Circle Theater was designed in the Neo-Classical style instead of the Spanish Revival Style. Since it was constructed in 1916 it predates many of these other theaters and the full glamour and escapism of motion pictures had not yet hit. The Circle Theater was one of the

first "deluxe movie palaces" in the Midwest built specifically for feature-length movies. Located on Monument Circle in downtown Indianapolis, it fills a portion of the southeast quadrant of the Circle.



Architects Preston Rubush and Edgar Hunter designed the main façade to follow the curves of the road therefore the façade is concave. Covered in white terra cotta, there are a series of subtle exterior decorative features--

simple molded panels, a bracketed cornice and pediment across the top, rosettes and swag garlands. However the marquee and a restored Grecian mural dominate the façade. The relatively subdued decorative scheme carries over to the interior. Shades of rose, ivory, and gray prevail throughout. There are plaster moldings and Greek figurines but the senses are not overwhelmed like they would be in a later theater.



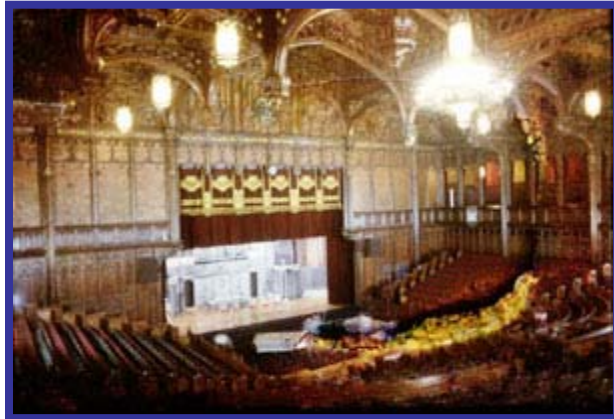
The Circle Theater continued to host movies, concerts, and live acts until 1981 although it suffered due to increased

competition from suburban multiplexes. It was facing demolition when a series of Indianapolis organizations banded together to save it. In 1982, the Circle underwent a major restoration and celebrated its re-opening in 1984 as the home of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. Indianapolis Power and Light owned the property but they leased it to the Symphony. In 1990 the Symphony was able to purchase the Theater and they retain ownership today.

Circle Theater  
32 East Washington Street, Suite 600  
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2919  
317/ 262-1100  
[www.indyorch.com](http://www.indyorch.com)

### **Scottish Rite Auditorium, Indianapolis (Marion)**

George T. Schreiber designed the Scottish Rite building in the Tudor Gothic style. Construction began on the limestone building in 1927 and lasted until 1929. Centralized within the Scottish Rite is a 210 foot tower that holds a 65 bell carillon. On the second floor is the Auditorium which was patterned after the Cologne Cathedral in Germany. The walls are covered with decorative panels and the ceiling has richly carved cathedral trusses, all of curly Russian white oak. The bronze chandelier in the center of the ceiling weighs 2400 pounds.



Scottish Rite Cathedral  
650 North Meridian Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
800/ 489-3579  
[www.aasr-indy.org](http://www.aasr-indy.org)

Tours of the building are offered Monday-Friday 10:00am-2:00pm.

### **Murat Shrine Temple, Indianapolis (Marion)**

This massive building, constructed in 1909, originally was the headquarters for the Ancient Arabic Order, Nobles of the Mystic Shrine. Indianapolis architect Oscar Bohlen created this Middle Eastern styled building with minarets, brick banding, towers, stained glass, and terra cotta. The interior is just as opulent as the exterior and is adorned with brass, marble, and terrazzo floors inland with mosaic. It also houses a 2000 seat theater.





Since the Shriners membership continued to grow, space became an issue. Rubush and Hunter were hired in 1922 to design an addition and managed to blend it with the original structure. Known as the Egyptian Room, this room was modeled after the tomb of King Tut. Yet another addition occurred in 1968. Though built of concrete, there is a large mural of three Arabian men crossing the desert which ties in to the Egyptian theme.

In 1995, several interested parties worked together to save the Murat Shrine Temple. A major renovation took place and the theater is now used for concerts and live performances.

The Murat Center  
502 North New Jersey Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
317/ 231-0000 or 317/ 951-4090  
[www.murat.com](http://www.murat.com)

### **Eagles Theater, Wabash (Wabash)**

The Eagles Theater, named for its location within the Eagles Building, opened in 1906. It was designed by Arland W. Johnson of Toledo, Ohio and occupied the first, second and third floors of the building. There were approximately 700 seats on the main floor and two balconies.

The Eagles leased the theater to the Dickson brothers in 1913 and sold it them by 1917. The theater hosted vaudeville and road shows and, in 1929, the first "talkie". The Eagles utilized these forms of entertainment through the 1940s. The Eagles Theater continued to show motion pictures and still shows first run movies today.



Eagles Theatre  
106 W Market St  
Wabash, IN 46992  
260/ 563-3272  
[www.eaglestheatre.cjb.net](http://www.eaglestheatre.cjb.net)



## **Elco Theater "Lerner", Elkhart (Elkhart)**

The Elco started out in 1924 as the Lerner Theater. This 2000-seat theater was designed for vaudeville by K. V. Vitthum, a Chicago architect. The exterior was covered in glazed terra cotta and had a series of columns, urns, and decorative cornice and frieze. The interior had terrazzo floors, gilding, marble, and a crystal chandelier. The auditorium was colored in tones of blue and cream and crowned



with a 35 foot diameter dome covered with 1400 lights. A Kimball organ was installed to compliment the entertainment on stage. By the late 1920s, the Lerner started showing motion pictures.

In 1931 the Lerner was sold to the Warner family and the name changed to the Warner. Its life as the Warner was short lived—the theater was bankrupt by 1933. Yet another name change happened in 1934 when the

Indiana-Illinois Theatre purchased it. They sponsored a county wide contest to rename the theater and it became the Elco. Manta and Rose Theatre chain owned the theater until 1961 when it was sold to William Miller. Miller managed the theater through the lean years and his family sold it to the city of Elkhart in 1990. A non-profit organization was formed and began restoring the Elco. The city continued to support the theater and they began to pay for a managing director and maintenance staff in 1995.

Today the Elco serves as a performing arts center in Elkhart and hosts live acts.

Elco Performing Arts Center  
410 S Main St  
Elkhart, IN 46516  
574/ 293-4469  
[www.elcotheater.org](http://www.elcotheater.org)

## **Ritz Theater , Rockville (Parke)**

The Rockville Opera House was built in 1912 of yellow brick. Designed in the Mission Revival style, the Opera House originally held live performances and was later adapted for movies.

Now known as the Ritz, the Rockville Chamber of Commerce purchased the theater in 1969 to save it from demolition. They



attempted to run movies for a time but in 1971 the theater became the home of the Parke Players. The Parke Players have been working on restoring the theater since 1971 as they acquire funding. The Ritz also shows movies.

The Ritz  
210-218 W Ohio St  
Rockville, IN 47872  
765-569-7529  
[www.parkeplayers.com/ritz\\_theater.htm](http://www.parkeplayers.com/ritz_theater.htm)

### **Artcraft Theater, Franklin (Johnson)**

The 1922 Artcraft Theater is just off the courthouse square in Franklin. It originally hosted silent movies and vaudeville. It was also used by the local high school and Franklin College for plays and performances. In the 1930s-1940s the Artcraft was renovated into the Art Deco styled building it is today.



The Artcraft was in continuous use as a movie theater until 2000. Franklin Heritage purchased the Artcraft in early 2004 and plans to restore the theater for movies and live performances, including the orchestra pit. Upon completion, Franklin Heritage will move their offices into the Artcraft and resume their "Classic Cinema on a Classic Screen" film series.

Artcraft Theatre  
53 N Main St  
Franklin, IN 46131

Contact Franklin Heritage at 317/ 736-6823 for information about the Artcraft.

### **Crump Theater, Columbus (Bartholomew)**

The building that houses the Crump Theater dates back to 1870. It was converted into the Crump Opera House about 1899. The 600 seat Romanesque styled building was remodeled again in the 1920s to accommodate motion pictures. However, the most dramatic renovation occurred in 1934 after Louis Holwager of Madison, Indiana purchased the building. He basically constructed a new theater into the Art Deco building seen today—the metal facade, the stream-lined marquee, and a completely new interior were added.



Holwager held a contest to rename the Crump. The winning entry was "Von Ritz" but the change never took place. Locals felt that the Crump family had been instrumental to the growth of Columbus and remained loyal.

In 1987 the Crump was facing demolition but the community rallied and saved the building. It is currently under renovation.

Crump Theater  
425 Third St  
Columbus IN 47201  
812/ 376-6363

### **Crown Theater "Palace", Crown Point (Lake)**

The Palace Theater was built in 1914 to show motion pictures. The name changed to the Crown in the 1940s. At some point the façade was altered and now has a large crown projecting from above the marquee.

The Crown has continuously shown movies since it opened in 1914.

Crown Theatre  
19 N Court St  
Crown Point, IN 46307  
219/ 663-1616

